

COACHING RELATED FINDINGS OF A COMPARATIVE

PERSONALITY SURVEY

ISTVÁN KUNOS – LAURA KOMÓCSIN

Ph.D., Head of Department, Associate Professor, Department of Management; ICF Hungary
 University of Miskolc, Faculty of Economics
 szvkunos@uni-miskolc.hu

SUMMARY

Self-insight, conscious personality development and the continuous tracking of the changes in our personality play important roles from a leadership point of view. This article summarizes the findings of a Hungarian coaching-related survey in order to reveal personality differences between leaders and non-leaders. Our aim is to contribute to the development of coaching practice and education. The survey concerned measures 11 primary and 5 secondary personality factors based on 165 questions. 100 leaders and 200 non-leaders (100 men and 100 women) were asked to answer a questionnaire. Along with graphs and explanations, the results for each factor are listed below; giving the reader an opportunity to compare them.

Good leaders possess accurate self-insight, which they continually strive to deepen. The basis of accurate self-insight is balance. Both overly positive and overly negative self-evaluations can be barriers to the development of successful organizational abilities. Deeper self-insight helps us to have a clear vision of our aims and how to achieve them. Leaders need to form a picture of themselves that contains both advantageous and disadvantageous traits.

Personality can be measured from various points of view, there are lot of personality tests. However, the motivational structure of the personality is rarely examined by scientists. This structure contains those deep, significant, partly genetic primary needs, which determinate our aspirations, instruments, aims and also the style of our socio-strategies. These motivations or needs are more complicated than our instincts and generic-biological programmes. These drives are also referred to as “psychogen needs”, because they exist in the human-psychic sphere.

The exploration of these factors has motivated lots of scientific researchers to create various instruments and tests.

By filling in the above-mentioned questionnaire, we can compare ourselves in relation to other leaders concerning factors like: motivation for performance, sociability, aggression, the need for defence, scrupulousness, dominance, exhibitionism, independence, regardfulness, order, and helpfulness; and as secondary factors: the need for self-justification, rational dominance, aggressive non-conformitivity, and passive dependency.

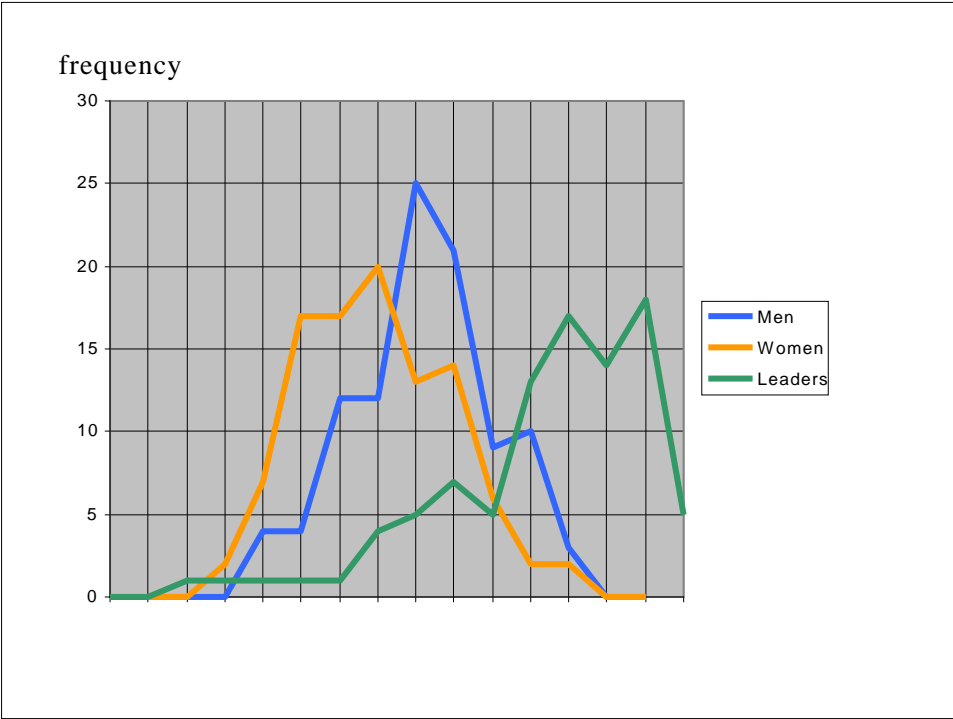
On the basis of these results, we cannot say that one person is a better leader than another. However, if we know our ordinary and less ordinary features, it helps us to orient ourselves and think over our aims. By the means of this survey, which deepens our self-insight, we can find out where we are at the moment and where we would like to go.

In this survey there are no “abnormal” results. Our needs are not good or bad, they just have different values attached to them. By taking a closer look into the mirror we have made, we can estimate our skills and abilities. Furthermore, we can decide what things we would like to develop and the ways in which we would like to develop them. The results, with our interpretations, are shown below.

1. INTERPRETATIONS

1.1. Motivation for performance

Motivation for performance is an inner motivation to create something, to win in a competitive situation, to be successful, to show our competences to ourselves and others, and to prove our skills and abilities.



Source: own

1. chart
Motivation for performance

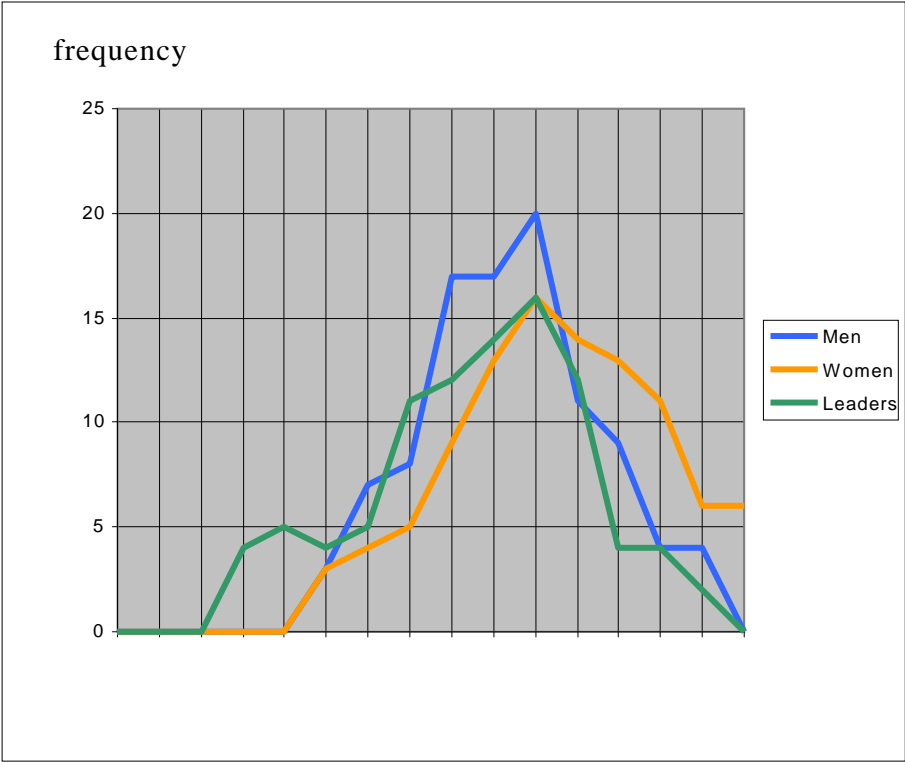
90% of the Hungarian leaders have scores between 7 and 14, non-leader men have scores between six and twelve, and non-leader women between five and ten. People over 55 years of age score 1 point less. The Figure demonstrates that leaders’ motivation for performance is higher than non-leaders’.

People who have higher scores try to show and prove their abilities in every situation. They value work and productivity (and respect it in others as well). They like challenges, competitions, and adventures.

If a person scores fewer points than average, it indicates that he or she is rather quiet, accomodating, less driven and less work-centric. Most of us have some motivation for performance. We differ only with regards to the amount of this quality we possess. Therefore, people should not be judged on their level of motivation for performance. A person who has a score of one is not any less valuable than somebody with a score of 15.

1.2. The need for affiliation

The essence of the need for affiliation is the desire to belong somewhere. This includes the need for social membership and the need for human relations with relatives, friends and partners. This need played an important role in the past, because it was one component in the quest for survival (the lonely individual died quickly).



Source: own

2. chart
The need for affiliation

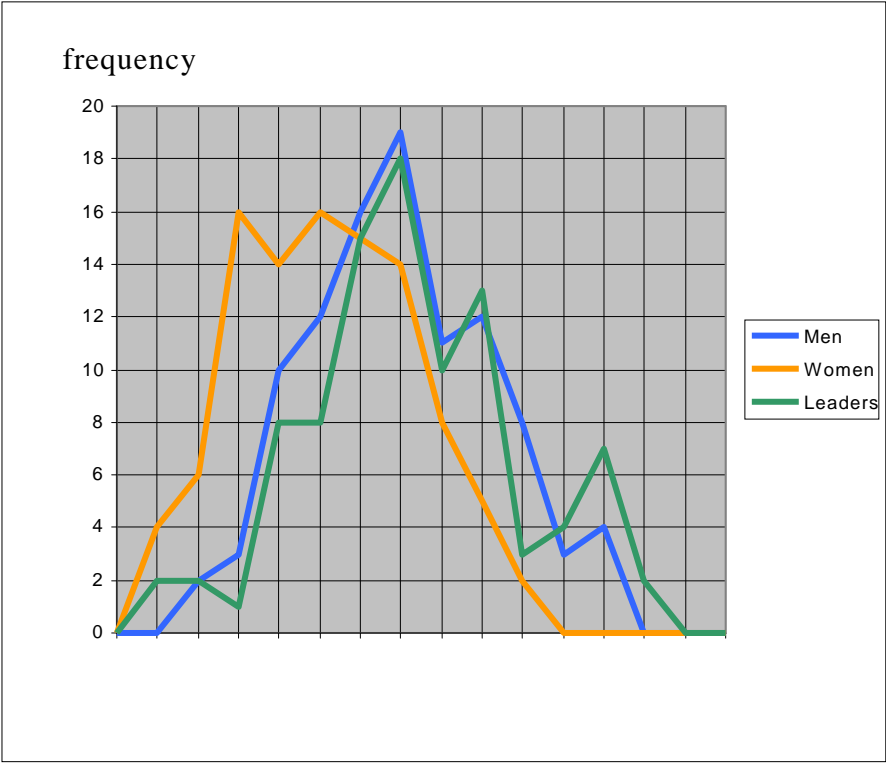
Everybody has the need for affiliation: 90% of the Hungarian leaders score between 5 and 12 with regards to this factor, non-leader men score between 6 and 12, and non-leader women between 8 and 13. These scores are unrelated to age. These results do not show a significant difference between the leader and non-leader populations.

People who score above the average have more emotional links to other people such as friends and relatives (not necessarily social relationships). These individuals show attention to the people around them.

People who score below the average are likely to be rather unsociable, lacking in empathy, introverted, and possibly egoistic.

1.3. The need for aggression

Aggression is not necessarily a negative feature. Survival seems to be impossible without aggression.



Source: own

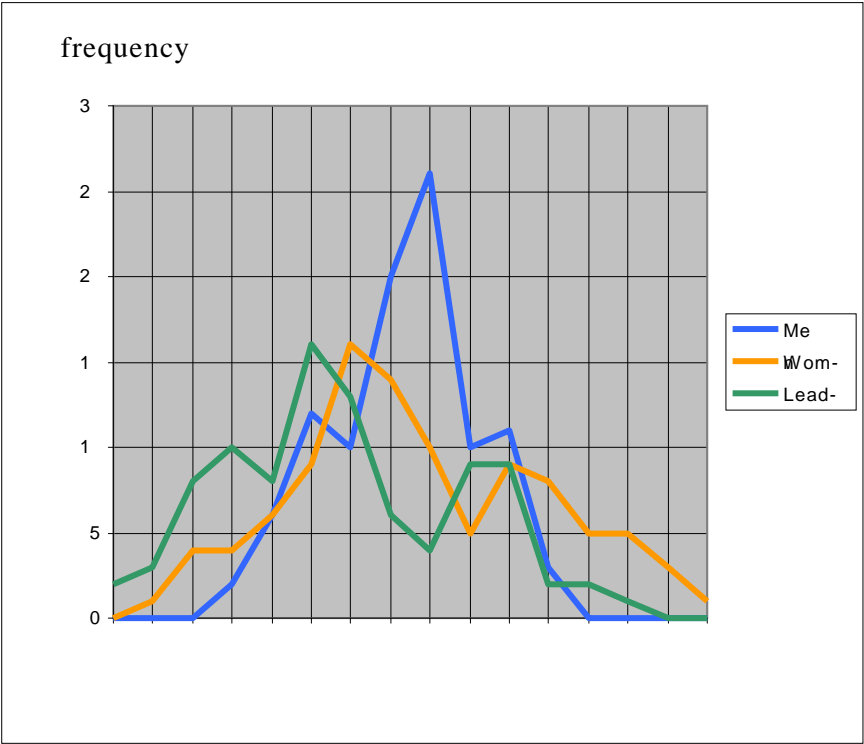
3. chart
The need for aggression

Leaders scored between 5 and 11, non-leader men scored between 4 and 10, and non-leader women between 3 and 7. The need for aggression decreases with age: for people above 60, scores of only 1 to 2 points are common. The figure shows that the results for leaders are closer to those of non-leader men than non-leader women.

Individuals who score more than ten are often prone to anger and direct wish-expression. (They also frequently have a need for anger management) These people are often surprised at their scores. Those with low scores are calm, peaceful and gentle people, who would rather submit, surrender, and give up than come into conflict with somebody or fight. There is no doubt that society strongly reduces the need for aggression, but higher scores do not mean a problem. They just indicate a personality feature that one can use as a drive in various areas of life.

1.4. The need for defence

This motivation means self-defence. This can include both physical and psychological defence, but also the defence of our self-esteem and the positive picture we have created of ourselves.



Source: own

4. chart
The need for defence

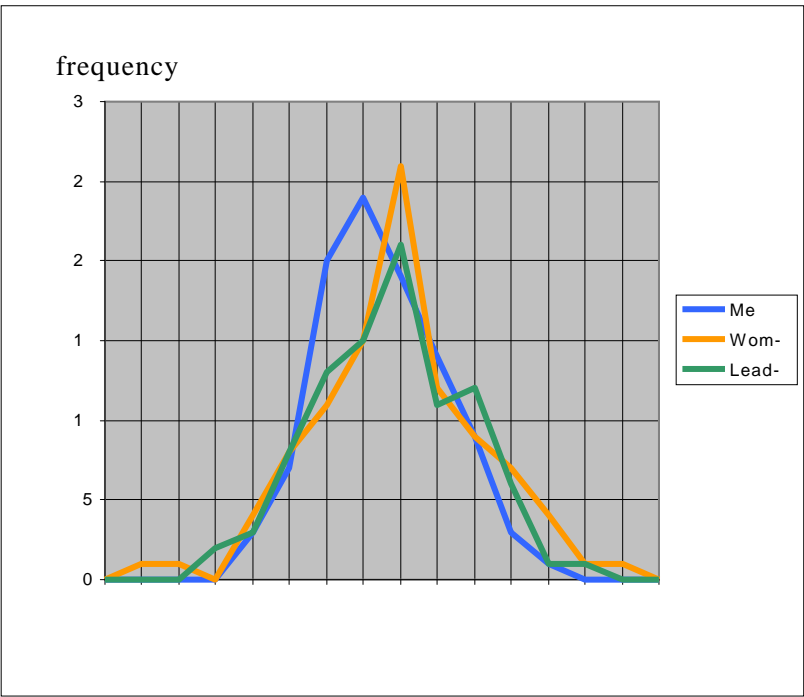
90% of Hungarian leaders got scores of between 2 and 9, and non-leader men scored between 5 and 10, as did non-leader women. These scores change slightly with age. The average scores of leaders and non-leaders are very similar, but the deviation is smaller with non-leader men.

People who score higher than average are basically defensive. It is important to them to avoid failure. They often explain away episodes of bad luck and reject criticism, because they have to defend their precarious self-esteem in this way.

Individuals with lower scores tend to be accommodating, flexible people, who are willing to change. These people can easily bear the consequences of failure. They often have very strong self-confidence, but can be modest as well.

1.5. The need for scrupulousness

In fact, here we are focusing on the characteristic of remorse. We need to believe we act in a moral and decent way. If we know we have not behaved in this manner, we require penance, confession and absolution.



Source: own

5. chart
The need for scrupulousness

The leaders' scores are between 5 and 10, and are similar to those of non-leader men and women. Between ages of 55 and 60, the score increases by 1. The three curves are very similar, so there are no significant differences regarding sex, age, and position.

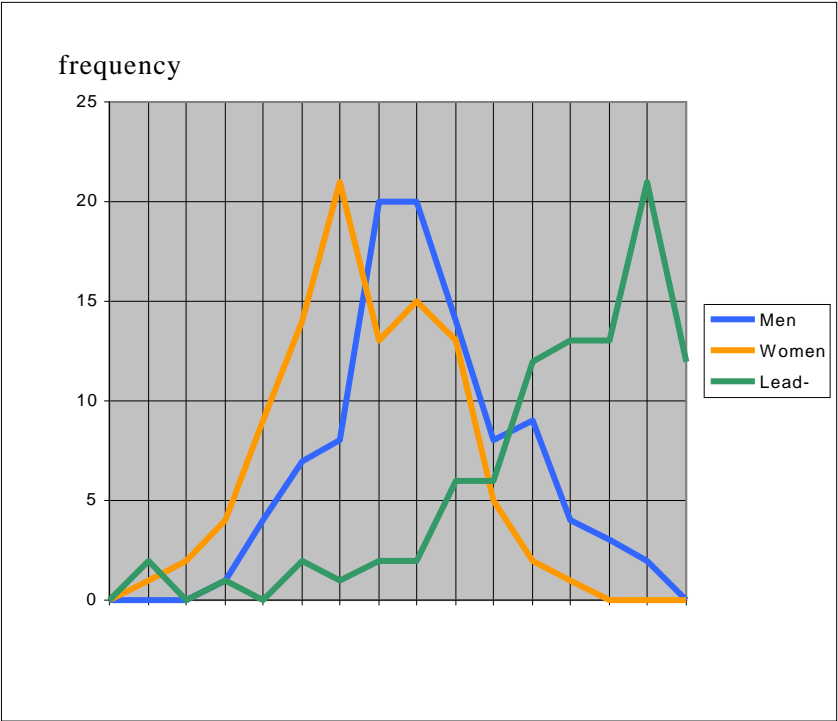
People who have high scores are usually scrupulous, fair, faithful, well-balanced, loyal and ethical.

Lower scores indicate people who are frivolous and unscrupulous, and who have less of a conscience. Such individuals have a preference for play-acting and they sometimes break the rules.

People with very high scores (above 13) can be self-destructive and masochistic, while those with scores from 0 to 2 may sometimes exhibit irresponsible, inconsiderate and insensitive behaviour.

1.6. The need for dominance

The need for dominance means the desire to have power over other people and the wish to be in control. This need motivates people to become politicians, captains, chairmen and leaders in various fields. This trait is in every of one us, we just differ in the extent to which we possess it.



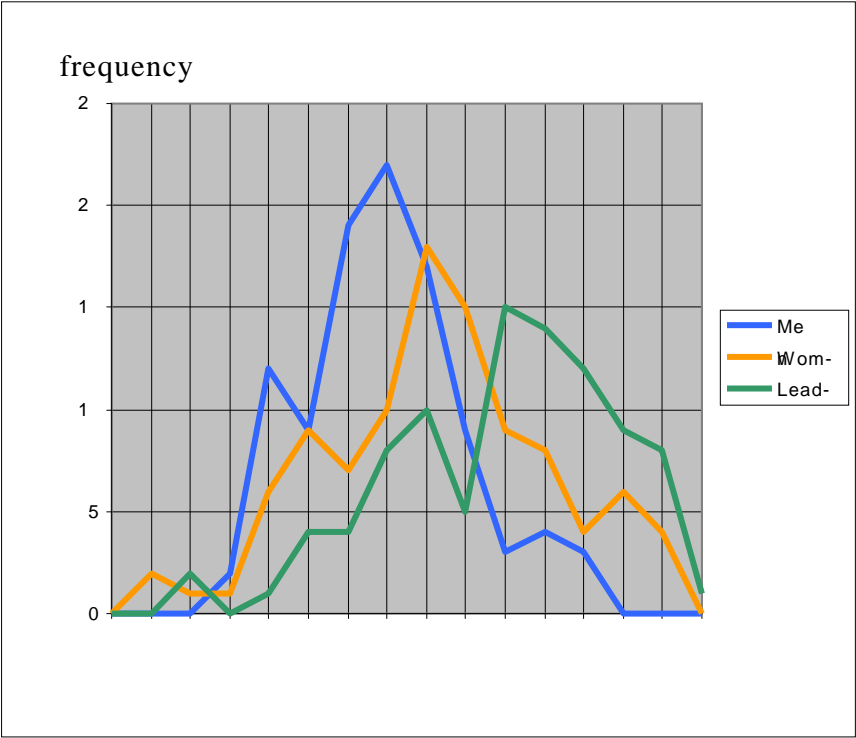
Source: own

6. chart
The need for dominance

90% of Hungarian leaders scored between 7 and 14, non-leader men scored between 5 and 11 and non-leader women between 4 and 9. For those above 60, the score is 1 point less. The Figure shows that the leaders' need for dominance is much higher than that of non-leaders'. If a person has a score above average, he/she will probably strive for a leadership position. They will have a strong motivation for leading and ruling over others. Low scores naturally mean the opposite: an accomodating, rather receptive person who carries out orders obediently and efficiently; instead of a dominant or leading personality type. Very high scores indicate people who, besides having good social skills, are often very successful. Naturally, on the other hand, such individuals usually have a lot of conflicts as well.

1.7. The need for exhibition

This need reflects our concerns with our appearance and our desire to push ourselves into the centre of attention. Regarding this need, parallels are often drawn with the good-looking Greek guy *Narcissus*. All of us have this need, even if in some cases we would like to hide it.



Source: own

7. chart
The need for exhibition

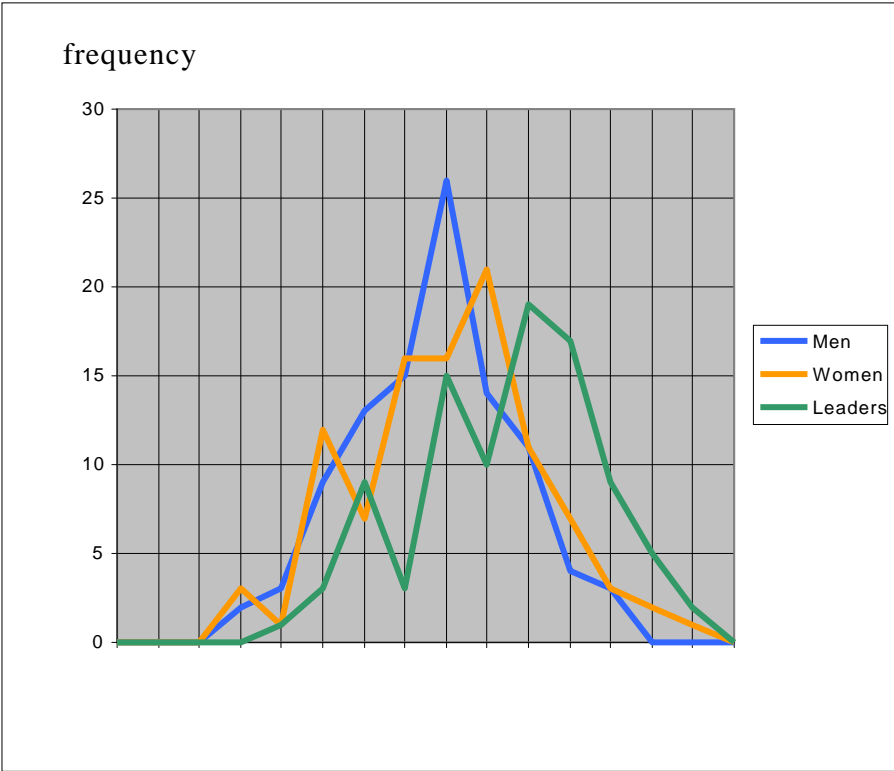
Leaders have scores of 6 to 13. The average for non-leader men is between 4 and 9, whilst for non-leader women – at between 5 and 10 – the average is slightly higher. These scores decrease quickly with age: for people above 60, the score is at least 2 points less. Taking all this into consideration, we can conclude that leaders show much more exhibitionism than non-leaders.

Individuals with high scores tend to become actors, politicians, teachers, artists, and even doctors and lawyers. People who work in these professions and who do not have a strong need for exhibitionism worry a lot. The need for exhibition is not only a female feature. Presenting ourselves has been the key to survival since ancient times.

People with lower scores may display characteristics associated with severity, dignity and reserve.

1.8. The need for autonomy

Autonomy can be defined as having independence, and acting according to our own will and inner compass.



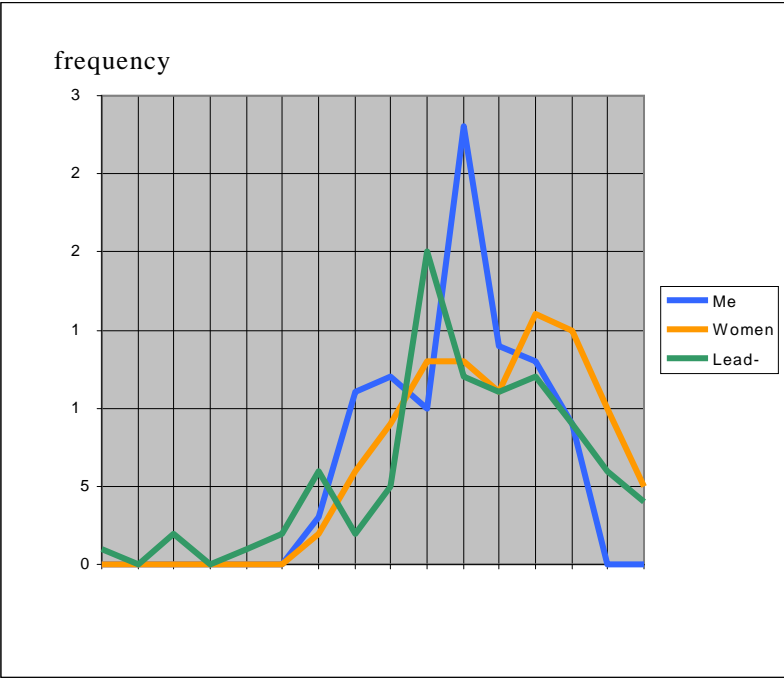
Source: own

8. chart
The need for autonomy

90% of Hungarian leaders scored between 7 and 12, non-leader men and women both have scores of between 5 and 10. Leaders have a greater need for autonomy. People with higher scores particularly require independence from others, act on their own, and make their own decisions about what they like and what they reject. When making decisions and forming viewpoints, they do not follow public opinion or the advice of others. They make their own rules. They stick to these rules even if they cause conflicts or have drawbacks. People with low scores are good at making adjustments, and tend to display characteristics of dependence and obedience. They like group decisions, tend to believe public opinion, and can easily tolerate being dependent on others. They are good subordinates. People with low scores are easy to deal with, while those with higher scores can be more difficult.

1.9. The need for regardfulness

One of the most typical forms of regardfulness is so called “the maternal instinct”, which can be defined as defending, feeding and loving the weak. From a broader perspective, this is the inner need to help the unlucky, sick and weak. This intention is a basic need from ancient times, because only those groups whose team members helped each other during times of trouble could survive (other groups quickly perished).



Source: own

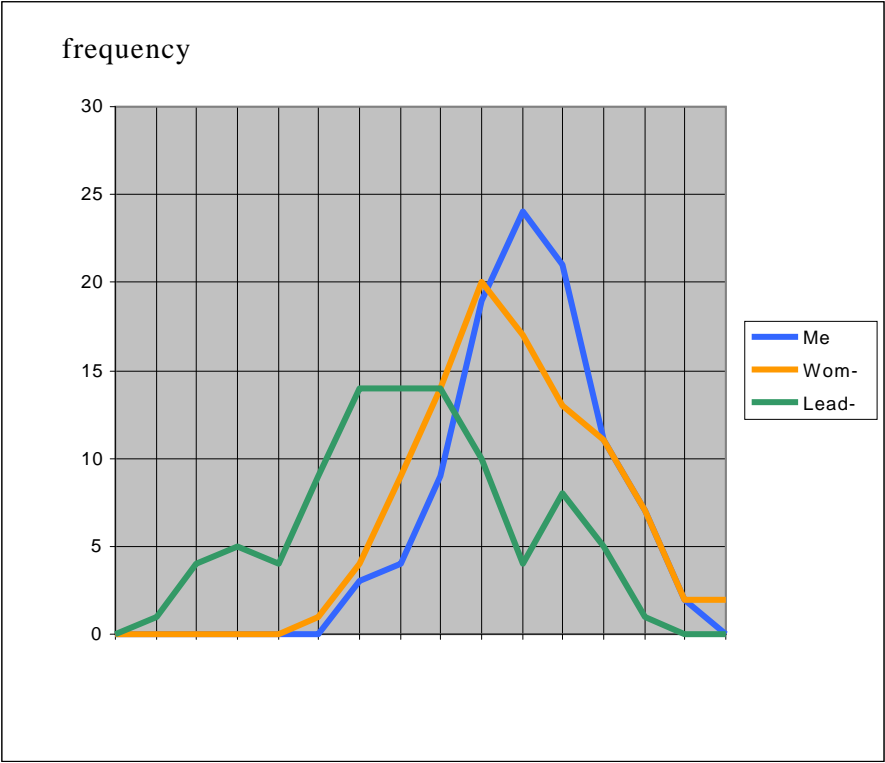
9. chart
The need for regardfulness

The leaders' scores are between 6 and 13, which are slightly less than the scores for non-leader men, who scored between 7 and 13 (average scores). The average for non-leader women is between 9 and 14. These score increase with age by 1 to 2 points. So non-leader women scored the highest, followed by non-leader men, and lastly by the leaders.

People with higher scores tend to be caring individuals who help others because they are motivated by love. Those with lower scores tend to be reserved, neglectful and less empathetic. The need for regardfulness manifests itself not only towards people, but towards animals as well.

1.10. The need for order

We might wonder whether the order and cleanliness of our surroundings is the result of an instinctual need deeply programmed within us. A broader definition of this term could include the need to order knowledge and memories, and the need for unification. We try to understand the order of the world we live in.



Source: own

10. chart
The need for order

90% of Hungarian leaders have an average score of between 3 and 11. Non-leader men scored between 8 and 13, while non-leader women had an average of between 8 and 12. The deviation of leaders is quite high compared to non-leaders, and their average score is also much less.

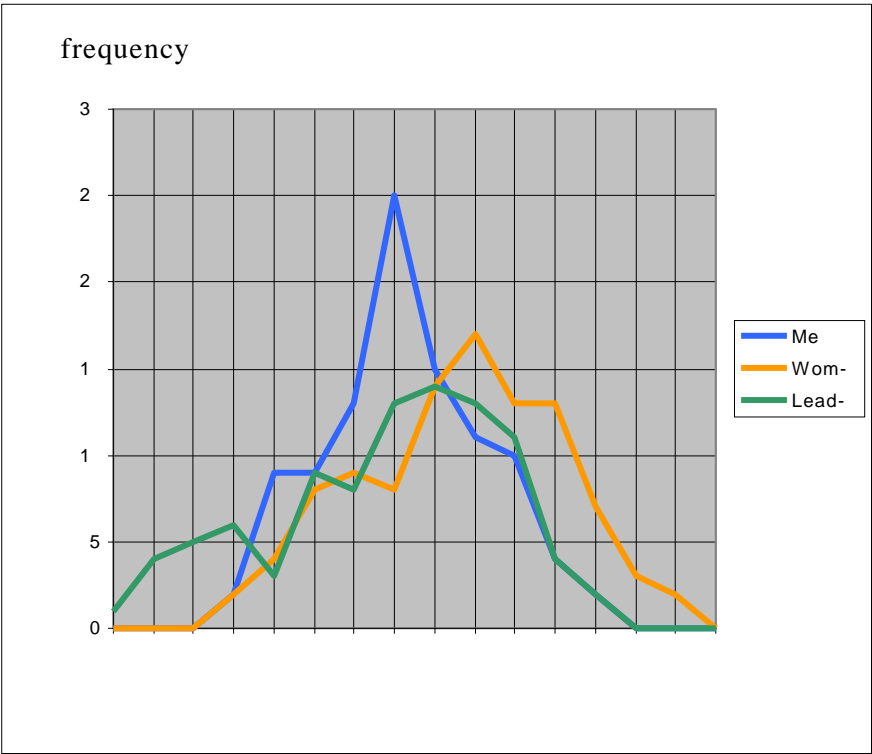
Higher scores indicate an increased need for order and cleanliness. Extremely high scores can indicate mania.

Very high scores are often characteristic of rational, intelligent, but introverted people who are sometimes prone to worry.

Those with lower scores are often unconstrained, unfocused and unambitious. There is a need to underline again that extremely high or extremely low scores do not mean abnormal or less valuable people. They simply mean that we are different from each other.

1.11. The need for help

This motivation means that, when we are in trouble, we need the help, care and empathy of others. The need for help does not have a sexual content.



Source: own

11. chart
The need for help

90% of the leaders examined have scores of 2 to 10. The average for non-leader men is between 4 and 10, and for non-leader women it is between 5 and 12. There are hardly any changes with regards to age. The group with the greatest need for help is non-leader women, followed by non-leader men, and lastly by the leaders.

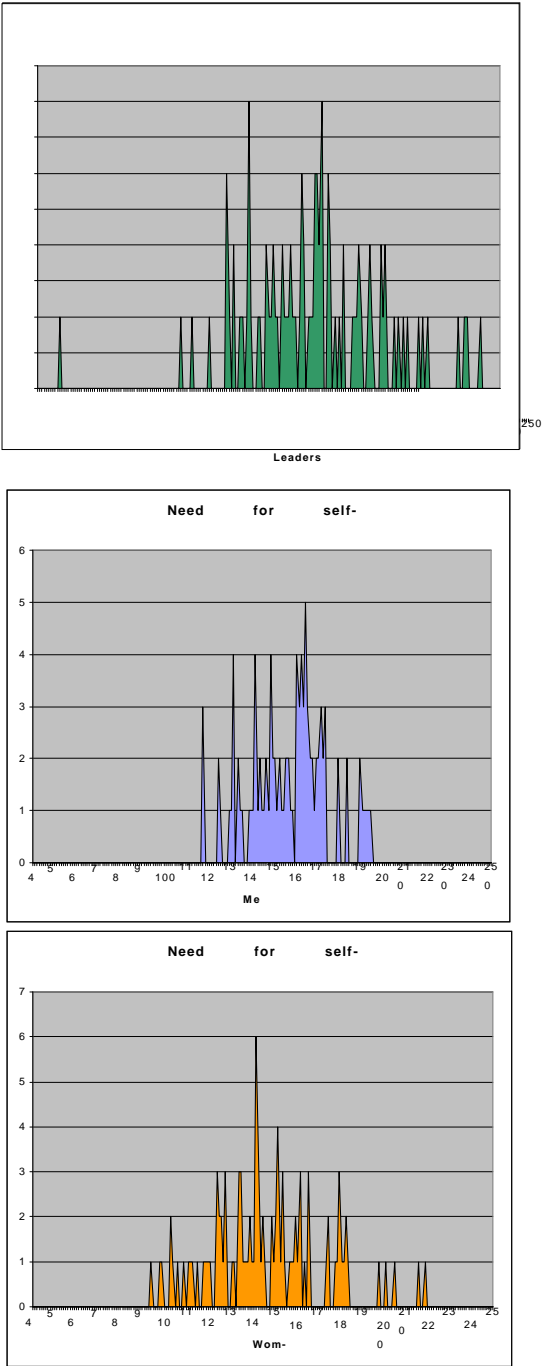
People with high scores tend to depend on others, and they worry if they have to face problems alone. It is clear this motivation has a biological aim.

Persons who have lower scores become withdrawn and hide when they fail or get sick. Some of them are disposed to fake illness in order to get the help they so desire from others.

1. SECONDARY FACTORS:

The need for self-justification

This drive is characteristic of the so called “*neurotic*” type. Those with higher scores tend to consistently fail and experience great frustration.



Source: own
12. chart Secondary factors

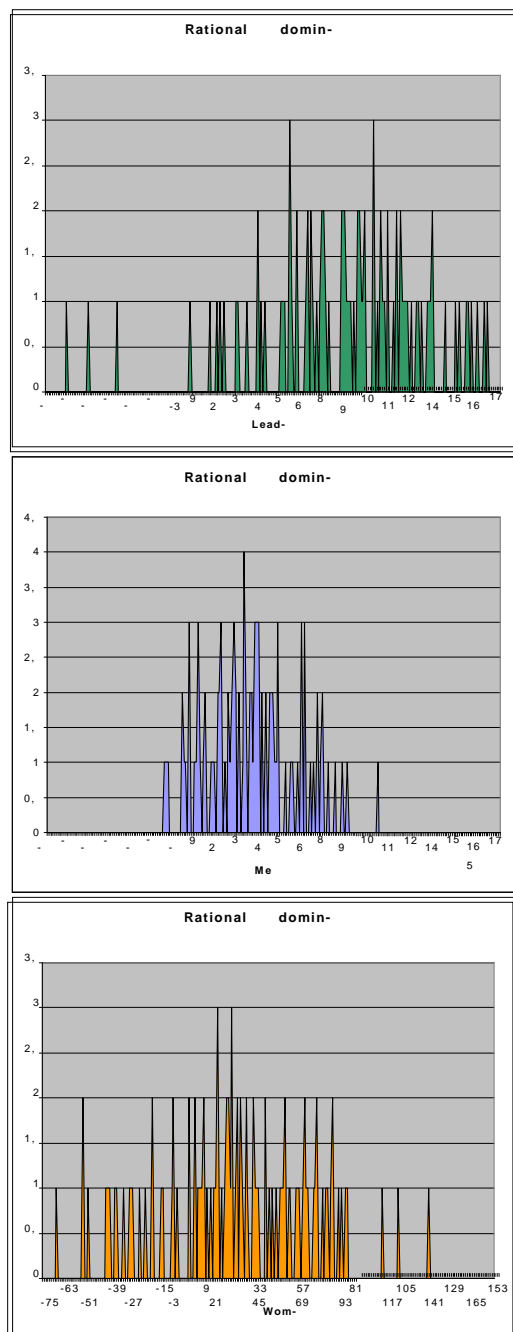
90% of Hungarian leaders got scores between 126 and 216, while non-leader men scored between 120 and 165. So it seems that this difference between these two classes of males indicates that this feature is more important for leaders than for non-leaders.

Higher scores indicate a mixture of the desires for defence and attack. This manifests itself in phenomena such as the need to defend our values against real or imagined offences, the need to prove that our beliefs are true, and adherence to our ideas and our background.

Lower scores may indicate passivity, and a tendency to withdraw from other people and the world. Some people accept their low level of self-respect and build it into their self-image.

Rational dominance

Rational dominance can be defined as the desire to overcome others by the use of instruments such as arguments, power etc.



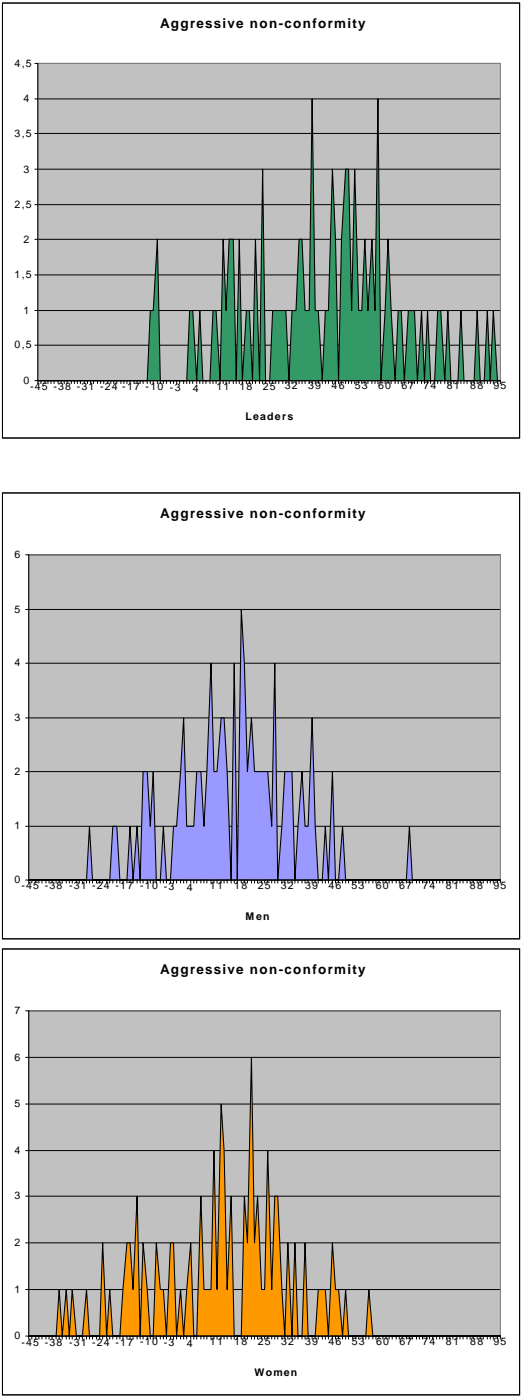
Source: own
13. chart Secondary factors

Rational dominance also includes the need for success, the need to compete and the need to manage others. The average scores of Hungarian leaders are between 22 and 160. Non-leader men scored between 10 and 65, and non-leader women between 5 and 40. There is a significant difference between men and women. Scores greatly decrease with age, and women can have scores as good as 0 to 10. We can detect even more significant differences between leaders and non-leaders, because, as our hypothesis states, leaders have much greater needs regarding rational dominance. People with higher scores are competitive and have a need for success. They strive to overcome others, even unfairly, and often at the expense of other human values like care, love, empathy etc. This is especially true of individuals with scores from about 90 to 100.

People with very low scores – especially in the minus range – tend to be unassertive and quiet. They do not enjoy fighting and competing, but instead have other kinds of values. Therefore, there is a significant decrease in the need for rational dominance with age, because the time for fighting passes.

Aggressive non-conformity

Aggressive non-conformity can include traits such as rebelling against social traditions, conventions and values. It can also mean following one's individual intentions and wishes, and creating and following one's own rules, if necessary by force. In addition, it can include a general refusal to obey every type of order and authority, and a tendency to rebel against expectations and official institutions.



Source: own

14. chart

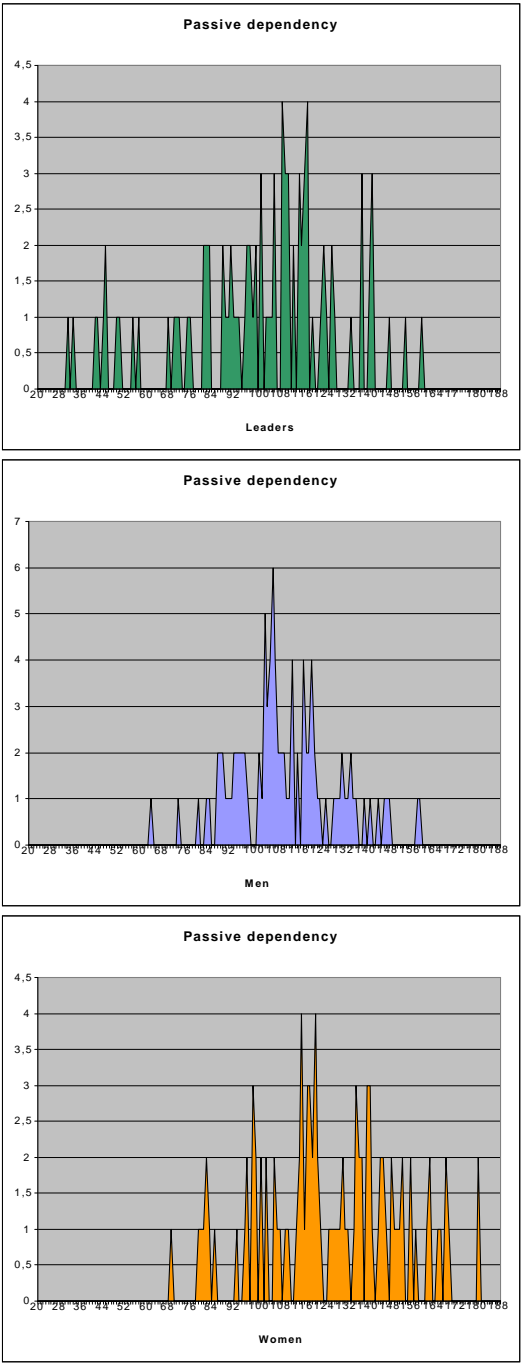
Hungarian leaders got scores of between 3 and 78. Non-leader men scored between 5 and 22, and non-leader women between 10 and 23. So, we can see the trait of aggressive non-conformity is more pronounced amongst leaders.

Higher scores indicate people with the needs mentioned above: in other words, the desire to have one's own way against other people, society and traditions, whatever it takes.

Those with lower scores tend to be accomodating individuals who behave in a respectful manner and are good at making adjustments. Aggressive non-conformity is usually the driving-power behind development and innovation. On the other hand, those with lower-end scores are likely to be people who help to achieve and maintain peace, harmony, warmth and safe human relations.

Passive dependency

Passive dependency can include behaviour such as striving for safety, letting others make decisions in important situations, the preference for dependence in order to have safety, and hiding behind other people so as to avoid the weight of responsibility. Passive dependency is a very common human feature. This might seem contradictory, but we humans are contradictory creatures.



Source: own
15. chart
Secondary factors

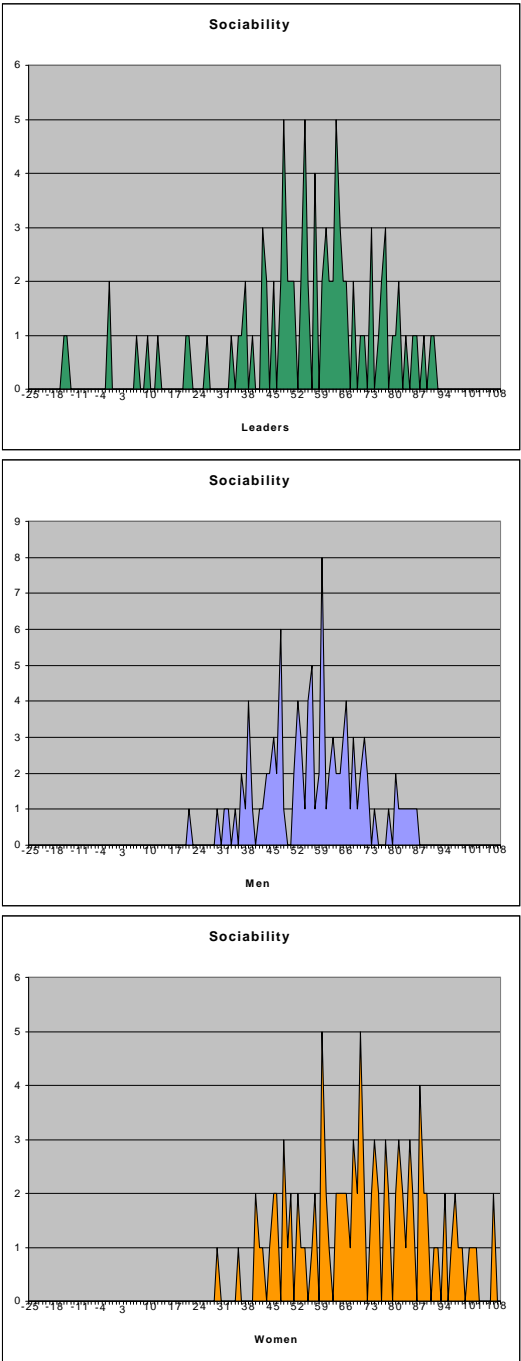
90% of Hungarian leaders got scores of between 45 and 142. Non-leader men scored between 85 and 125, and non-leader women between 100 and 140. There is virtually no change with regard to age. So, the qualities of independence, high performance and assertiveness are more important for leaders than safety and the need for regardfulness.

Higher scores indicate people who are willing to give up their independence for a safer environment.

Those with lower scores have a need for independence, a need to perform successfully, and a desire to be in the centre of attention in various situations.

Sociability

Sociability can include the need to be feel one is a social being, the need to belong to a group, and the need to share common activities with others. Sociability can also include emotional intelligence, coupled with the capacity for tolerance and warmth.



Source: own
16. chart
Secondary factors

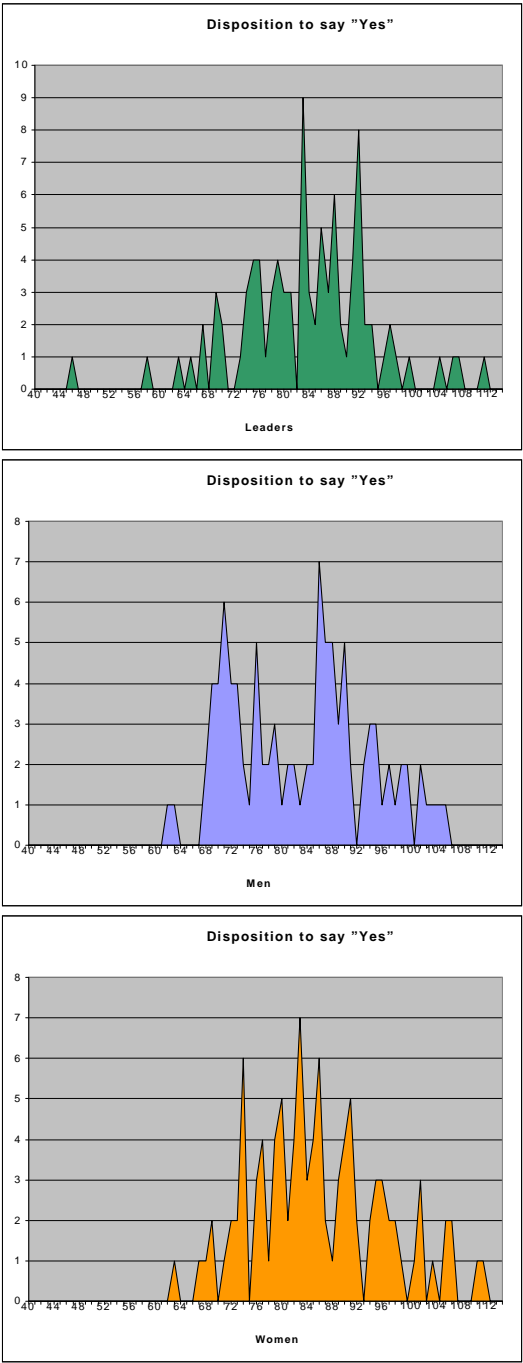
The average scores of leaders were between 7 and 84. Non-leader men scored between 40 and 80, and non-leader women between 55 and 90.

People with high scores are likely to be sociable, open, relaxed, and friendly.

Those with lower scores may often feel the odd man out. They are introverted people who prefer dealing with facts and objects. People with very low scores are often dreamy individuals with a poor grasp of reality.

The disposition to say “yes”

This is the measure of how far we tend to say “yes” rather than “no” to various questions.



Source: own
17. chart
Secondary factors

The average score is somewhere between 60 and 100, while 90% of Hungarian leaders got scores of 68 to 99.

If your score is above this, you tend to say “yes” in various situations, so you are a rather accomodating person who likes to agree and accept.

Scores below 60 – and particularly below 45 – indicate rather rebellious, bull-headed people who often refuse, argue and protest. This factor is not a real “psychogen need”, but only a by-product of the test.

SUMMARY

By analysing the test-results, we can explore different personality traits that could be of interest from the managerial point of view.

On the basis of the 17 traits examined, the following list shows the significant differences that were found between leaders and non-leaders. So, leaders:

- have a higher motivation for performance
- have a greater need for dominance
- are more exhibitionistic
- place a higher value on autonomy
- have a lower need for regardfulness
- have a lower need for help
- place a higher value on self-justification
- place a higher value on rational dominance
- have higher scores regarding aggressive non-conformitivity
- have a lower level of passive dependency

There are no big differences concerning the factors below:

- the need for affiliation
- the need for defence
- the need for scrupulousness
- the need for sociability
- the disposition to say “yes”.

These findings can be built into leadership development programmes, in addition to coaching education and coaching practice.

REFERENCES

- [1] Balogh László, Barta Tamás, Dominik Gyula, Koncz István: Vezetépszichológiai sarokpontok, (Basics of Leadership psychology) Szókratész Külgazdasági Akadémia, Budapest, 2000.
- [2] Fedor György, Hidegkuti István, Münnich Ákos: Tesztek használata a pszichológiában és a pedagógiában: minőségi és alkalmazhatósági kritériumok, (Tests in Psychology and pedagogy) Alkalmazott Pszichológia, 3. évfolyam, 1. szám, 2001, 55-62.
- [3] Juhász Márta: Munka és Személyiség (Work and personality) / Az FFM (Five Factor Model) előrejelző érvényessége a munkateljesítményre, Alkalmazott pszichológia, 2. évfolyam, 4. szám, 2000, 43-57.
- [4] Kun Ágota: Van-e általános érvényű taxonómia? Az ötfaktoros személyiségmodell, (Is there any general taxonomy? (Five Factor Personality Model)), Alkalmazott pszichológia, 1. évfolyam 2. szám, 1999, 61-73.
- [5] Kunos István: "Role of Personality in the Management Science", University of Caen, Franciaország, 2006. május 09.
- [6] Kunos István: Positive Psychology in Management Science, 4th European Conference on Positive Psychology, Opatija, Croatia, 2008.07.01-04.
- [7] Kunos István: A vezetépszichológia pozitív lélektanra épülő adaptációs modellje, „Hagyományok és új kihívások a menedzsmentben” (Adaptation model of leadership psychology built on positive psychology) konferencia, Debrecen, 2008.október 2-3.
- [8] Kunos István: Pozitív pszichológia a vezetésfejlesztésben (Positive psychology in leadership development), A Miskolci Egyetem Vezetéstudományi Intézetének 50 éves jubileumi kiadványa, Miskolc, 2009.
- [9] Kunos István: A vezetésfejlesztés lélektani alapjai – az önismeret jelentősége (The psychological basis of leadership development – the importance of self-insight), Miskolci Egyetem, Gazdaságtudományi Kar, VII. Nemzetközi Konferencia, Miskolc-Lillafüred, 2009. május 19-20.
- [10] Kunos István: Személyiségfejlesztés (Personality development), Miskolci Egyetem Kiadó, 2009.
- [11] Kunos István, Komócsin Laura: Coaching-orientált vezetői személyiségvizsgálat a hazai gyakorlatban (Coaching-oriented leadership survey in Hungary), Magyarországi Coaching Konferencia, Budapest, 2009.09.30.